

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method of distributing files between computing devices (10-22) of at least one group of computing devices including the step of performing a file reconciliation routine at periodic intervals automatically upon the networking of at least two of said computing devices.

2. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method according to claim 1, including the step of controlling at least one of said computing devices (10-22) to transmit file reconciliation data periodically irrespective of its or their connectivity to other computing devices.

3. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method according to claim 1-~~or~~2, including the step of providing in said computing devices (10-22) at least one shared files directory into which shared files are automatically stored.

4. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method according to claim 3, wherein the at least one shared files directory is directly accessible by software applications stored in the computing devices (10-22).

5. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method according to ~~any preceding claim~~, claim 1, including the step distributing all shared files amongst all computers networked together.

6. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method according to claim 1, wherein all distributed files can be read from and written to in any of said computing devices (10-22).

7. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method according to ~~any preceding claim~~, claim 1, including the steps of issuing file data to unspecified computers (10-22) within the group and receiving file data from unspecified computers (10-22) within the group.

8. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method of distributing files between computing devices (10-22) of at least one group of computing devices including the steps of issuing file data to unspecified computers (10-22) within the group and receiving file data from unspecified computers within the group.

9. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method according to claim 8, including the step of accepting a computer (10-22) as a computer of said at least one group on the basis of the provision of group identification data specific to the group or specific to the device.

10. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method according to ~~any preceding claim~~, claim 8, including the step of transmitting a journal of file history for each shared file from one computer into the network.

11. [ORIGINAL] A method according to claim 10, including the step of a computing device requesting only file versions not stored therein.

12. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method according to claim 10 ~~or 11~~, wherein a file journal includes a code indicative of the contents of each file version in the journal.

13. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method according to ~~any preceding claim~~, claim 8, including the step of dividing files into a plurality of portions for data transfer.

14. [ORIGINAL] A method according to claim 13, wherein each file portion is provided with a contents code, the method including the step of transmitting only those file portions which have been modified.

15. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method according to claim 13 ~~or 14~~, including the step of providing in each computing device an accessible list of file portions stored therein and the step of determining whether a file portion required is stored therein from the list of accessible file portions.

16. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A method according to ~~any preceding claim~~, claim 8 including the step of storing file versions in a format in which they can be read from and written to.

17. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A distributed file system for distributing files between computing devices ~~(10-22)~~ of at least one group of computing devices ~~(10-22)~~ including a file reconciliation unit operable to reconcile files between computing devices at periodic intervals automatically upon the networking of said computing devices.

18. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A distributed file system for distributing files between computing devices ~~(10-22)~~ of at least one group of computing devices ~~(10-22)~~ including a

transmission unit operable to issue file data to unspecified computers (10-22) within the group and a receiving unit operable to receive file data from unspecified computers within the group.

19. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A computer network including a distributed file system according to claim 17 ~~or 18 or operable by a method of distributing files according to any one of claims 1 to 16.~~

20. [CURRENTLY AMENDED] A software application for distributing files stored on or in a memory device, which software application is operable to perform the method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 16~~ claim 1.

21. [NEW] A method according to claim 1, including the step of transmitting a journal of file history for each shared file from one computer into the network.

22. [NEW] A method according to claim 1, including the step of dividing files into a plurality of portions for data transfer.

23. [NEW] A method according to claim 1, including the step of storing file versions in a format in which they can be read from and written to.

24. [NEW] A software application for distributing files stored on or in a memory device, which software application is operable to perform the method according to claim 8.

25. [NEW] A computer network including a distributed file system according to claim 18.

26. [NEW] A computer network including a distributed file system operable by a method of distributing files according to claim 1.

27. [NEW] A computer network including a distributed file system operable by a method of distributing files according to claim 8.